

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 040753
ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/CE:JKORNBLUM:JF
APPROVED BY EUR - AAHARTMAN
EUR - RDVINE
EUR/CE:DANDERSON
EUR/SOV:RBERRY
S/S - MR.SEBASTIAN

-----240054 019403 /54

P R 232244Z FEB 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
USMISSION USBERLIN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040753

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, GW, GE, WB, US, UK, UR, FR

SUBJECT: ALLIED RESPONSE TO GDR MEASURES IN BERLIN

REFS: A) USBERLIN 456; B) BERLIN 5217; C) BONN A-38;
D) BONN 932

1. THE DEPARTMENT IS GRATEFUL FOR THE REPORTING AND
ANALYSIS OF GDR MEASURES IN BERLIN SUBMITTED BY ACTION
ADDRESSEES DURING THE PAST TWO MONTHS. THESE MESSAGES HAVE
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HELPED US IN CONSIDERING THE CONTINUING DILEMMA PRESENTED
TO THE WEST BY GDR EFFORTS TO DEMONSTRATE ITS FULL SOVER-
INGTY IN EAST BERLIN. THIS TELEGRAM PRESENTS THE DEPART-
MENT'S VIEWS ON THE SITUATION AND CONTAINS OUR COMMENTS ON
VARIOUS COUNTERMEASURES PROPOSED IN THE REFERENCED MESSAGES.

2. FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S POINT OF VIEW, THE MOST IMPORTANT

FACTOR TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CONSIDERING IMPLICATIONS OF THE GDR MEASURES IS THAT THEY REPRESENT PART OF A CONTINUING POLICY. OUR RELUCTANCE TO VIEW THE DECEMBER/JANUARY MEASURES AS PRESAGING A "CAMPAIGN" OR A "NEW" SITUATION IN BERLIN IS BASED ON THE LONG HISTORY OF GDR EFFORTS IN THIS AREA. THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE ATTEMPTS TO TAKE FURTHER ACTIONS OF THE SAME SORT IN THE FUTURE. THE KEY QUESTION

IS NOT WHETHER THE GDR AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT THE SOVIETS, ARE PLANNING FURTHER STEPS TO UNDERMINE THE FOUR POWER STATUS OF BERLIN, BUT RATHER WHETHER THEY WILL FIND IT OPPORTUNE TO DO SO.

3. PAST EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS AUTHORIZE GDR STEPS AGAINST THE STATUS OF BERLIN WHEN ONE OR MORE OF THREE CONDITIONS ARE MET: A) IF THE STEP IS MINOR ENOUGH TO ESCAPE WESTERN ATTENTION OR COMPLAINT; B) IF THE WEST DOES NOT SEEM TO BE IN THE MOOD FOR A FIGHT OVER BERLIN; OR C) IF THE NEED FOR ACTION IS SO GREAT THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE, REGARDLESS OF COST. ERECTION OF THE WALL IN 1961 CLEARLY FELL INTO THE FINAL CATEGORY. CHANGES IN VOLKSKAMMER SEATING AND VOTING PROCEDURES WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED GRADUALLY OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS PROBABLY FALL PRIMARILY INTO THE FIRST.

4. IN THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW, THE MOVES AGAINST BERLIN'S STATUS TAKEN IN RECENT WEEKS PROBABLY FALL TO SOME EXTENT INTO ALL THREE OF THE ABOVE CATEGORIES. SOME OF THE MOVES WERE ACCOMPLISHED GRADUALLY, WITH LITTLE FANFARE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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AFFECT LITTLE-KNOWN DETAILS OF THE BERLIN SITUATION. THE GDR UNDOUBTEDLY HOPED THEY WOULD BE HARDLY NOTICED OR, IF THEY WERE, DISMISSED AS BEING UNIMPORTANT. THE STEPS WERE TAKEN AT A TIME OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY IN THE WEST, WHEN BOTH THE US AND FRG WERE EMERGING FROM ELECTION CAMPAIGNS. THERE WAS AT LEAST SOME REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE WEST WOULD NOT BE IN THE MOOD FOR A FIGHT. AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE GDR HAD GONE THROUGH A ROUGH YEAR, BOTH INTERNALLY AND IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, A BUDDING DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AND GROWING PROBLEMS WITH COMING TO TERMS WITH CSCE AND IN MANAGING RELATIONS WITH THE FRG CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THE GDR LEADERSHIP. ADDED TO THIS IS THE PROSPECT OF SOVIET INTEREST IN MOVING FORWARD ACROSS A BROAD SCOPE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN 1977. THE SOVIETS SEEM TO DESIRE PROGRESS IN STRATEGIC ARMS TALKS WITH THE US; IN THE MBFR AND CSCE TALKS; AND IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE FRG. IN VIRTUALLY EVERY CASE IMPORTANT GDR INTERESTS ARE TO BE AFFECTED. AND IN ALMOST EVERY CASE, THE GDR CAN EXPECT TO

BE PUSHED INTO CONCESSIONS OF VARYING DEGREES OF IMPORTANCE BY THE SOVIETS.

5. EMBASSY BONN'S AIRGRAM A-38 PRESENTS AN EXCELLENT DISCUSSION OF THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MIGHT HAVE LED TO SOVIET APPROVAL OF FURTHER STEPS AT THIS TIME. IF MISSION BERLIN IS CORRECT IN SUPPOSING THAT THE GDR ACTIONS WERE DISCUSSED AT THE BUCHAREST MEETING (PARA. 5, USBERLIN 456), IT CAN BE IMAGINED THAT THE GDR PRESENTED URGENT REASONS

FOR RISKING A CONFRONTATION WITH THE WEST OVER BERLIN AT THIS TIME. BUT HOWEVER THE DECISION WAS REACHED, THE OVERWHELMING IMPRESSION IS OF A LIMITED PACKAGE OF MEASURES TAKEN TO SUPPORT SPECIFIC DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY NEEDS. THERE IS NO HINT AT THIS POINT OF A QUALITATIVELY DIFFERENT APPROACH TO THE SITUATION IN BERLIN.

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6. THIS CONCLUSION IS BUTTRESSED BY THE OVERALL SOVIET APPROACH TO EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN RECENT WEEKS. THE EMPHASIS HAS CLEARLY BEEN ON MAINTAINING THE PACE OF DETENTE AND OF MAKING PROGRESS IN RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. THE SOVIETS ARE WELL AWARE OF HOW FAR THEY CAN GO IN BERLIN WITHOUT RISKING A MAJOR CONFRONTATION. THE NUMEROUS SOUNDINGS TAKEN BY SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN RECENT WEEKS SUGGEST THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SENSITIVE TO THE NEED NOT TO GO TOO FAR, PARTICULARLY WITH A NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON. HOWEVER, NOTHING WHICH WE HAVE HEARD SUGGESTS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A "SIGNIFICANT CHANGE" IN THE EAST'S TACTICAL POLICY TOWARDS BERLIN.

7. ALLIED POLICYMAKERS HAVE PUZZLED FOR DECADES OVER THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO REACT TO EASTERN SALAMI TACTICS. TO SUGGEST THAT THERE IS NOTHING NEW IN THE GDR ACTIONS IS NOT TO CLAIM THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY OR THAT WE SHOULD NOT DO SOMETHING TO DISCOURAGE THE INEVITABLE NEXT STEP. BUT THE DOGGEDNESS WITH WHICH THE EAST GERMANS AND SOVIETS PURSUE THEIR INTERESTS IN BERLIN IS TESTIMONY TO THE IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACH TO THEIR INTERESTS THERE. FOR THE GDR, ESPECIALLY, THE EXISTENCE OF WEST BERLIN IS SEEN AS A MATTER AFFECTING THE SURVIVAL OF THEIR COMMUNIST SYSTEM. THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT IN OUR MINDS THAT AN ESCALATION OF COUNTERMEASURES BY THE WEST WOULD BE REPEATED IN KIND FROM THE EAST. AND GIVEN OUR ISOLATED POSITION IN BERLIN, WE ARE MUCH LESS ABLE TO WITHSTAND SUCH A CAMPAIGN THAN IS THE EAST.

8. THE WEST CANNOT, THEREFORE, EXPECT TO COME OUT AHEAD IN A GRADUATED ESCALATION OF RETALIATORY MEASURES AS

PROPOSED IN BERLIN 456. WHERE WE CAN EXPECT TO WIN, HOWEVER, IS IN ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OVERALL POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH IS CONDUCIVE TO SUCCESS OF WESTERN AIMS IN BERLIN. THE QA WAS DESIGNED TO FIT THE BERLIN PROBLEM INTO WHAT WOULD HOPEFULLY BE A DEVELOPING POLITICAL AND
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ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. IF, AS HAD BEEN SUGGESTED, BERLIN DIRECTLY AFFECTED AND WAS AFFECTED BY THIS OVERALL RELATIONSHIP, MAKING SURE THAT THE CITY DID NOT CONTINUE TO BE A SOURCE OF TENSION WOULD HELP ENSURE SURVIVAL OF FREE AND PROSPEROUS WESTERN SECTORS OF THE CITY.

9. THE DEPARTMENT'S APPROACH TO THIS PROBLEM SINCE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE QA HAS BEEN TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS A CLEAR DEFINITION OF WHAT IS AND IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE WEST WITHOUT, HOWEVER, ENCOURAGING DEMONSTRATIVE ACTS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO OPEN CONFRONTATION. THE DEPARTMENT AGREES WITH EMBASSY BONN THAT THE BEST WAY TO ACHIEVE THIS DEFINITION IS TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE SOVIETS THAT OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO FLOURISH IF TENSIONS CONTINUE TO BE CREATED IN BERLIN. WE AGREE THAT CERTAIN OTHER COUNTERMEASURES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN NECESSARY TO REENFORCE THE POINT. THE DEPARTMENT DISAGREES, HOWEVER, THAT OUR INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY TAKING THE MORE DRASTIC STEPS PROPOSED IN POINTS B-F IN PARA. 8 OF USBERLIN 456.

10. THE DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY TAKEN THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO IMPRESS UPON THE SOVIETS AND THE GDR THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS OF BERLIN:

A. OUR VIEWS HAVE BEEN RAISED AT A HIGH LEVEL WITH THE SOVIETS IN WASHINGTON. REPRESENTATIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE AT THE WORKING LEVEL TO OFFICIALS OF BOTH THE SOVIET AND GDR EMBASSIES.

B. VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S GOLDEN BOOK STATEMENT IN BERLIN WAS WRITTEN SPECIFICALLY TO UNDERSKORE OUR DETERMINATION ON THIS POINT.

C. TOGETHER WITH THE UK AND FRANCE, WE HAVE PROTESTED
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GDR MOVES FORMALLY IN MOSCOW. EMBASSY BONN ISSUED A

PRESS STATEMENT SETTING FORTH OUR POSITION ON THE ISSUE.

D. THE GDR HAS BEEN WARNED GENERALLY ABOUT THE HARMFUL EFFECT OF THEIR ACTIONS ON US-GDR BILATERAL RELATIONS. MOREOVER, THE EAST GERMAN REQUEST TO STATION RESIDENT TECHNICIANS IN THE US WILL NOT BE ACTED UPON FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THIS WILL BRING CONCRETE ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGES FOR THE GDR.

11. THE ABOVE REPRESENTS THE DEPARTMENT'S ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF WASHINGTON. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE GDR ACTIONS HAVE RAISED COMPLICATED POLITICAL, LEGAL AND TACTICAL QUESTIONS AND THAT A VARIETY OF CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN FORMULATING OUR RESPONSE. FOR THIS REASON, WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR COMMENTS ON THE DEPARTMENT'S ANALYSIS FROM BONN, BERLIN AND USBERLIN AS WELL AS FROM EMBASSY MOSCOW.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, SOVEREIGNTY, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES, BERLIN QUADRIpartite MATTERS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, STATUS OF BERLIN
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE040753
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JKORNBLUM:JF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770063-0468
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770216/aaaaaocq.tel
Line Count: 243
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d41861c0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 USBERLIN 456, 77 BERLIN 5217, 77 BONN A-38
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3248468
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALLIED RESPONSE TO GDR MEASURES IN BERLIN
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, GE, GC, WB, US, UK, UR, FR
To: BONN USBERLIN MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d41861c0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009